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Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
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O 022100Z JUL 78 ZFF-4
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 8602
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT NIACT IMMEDIATE
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM NIACT IMMEDIATE
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S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 DAMASCUS 3769

EXDIS

JERUSALEM FOR ASST SECY SAUNDERS

E.O. 11652 XGDS-1
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY
SUBJ: FONMIN KHADDAM'S VIEWS ON FIGHTING IN LEBANON

REF: STATE 167957

1. SUMMARY. KHADDAM SAYS PHALANGE AND CHAMOUN PROVOKED BEIRUT FIGHTING JULY 1 AND JULY 2 AS PART OF THEIR PLAN TO CONTROL LEBANON. ADF HAS NO CHOICE BUT TO RETURN FIRE AND SILENCE ITS SOURCE OR IT WILL LOSE ITS PRESTIGE AND ABILITY TO ACT. PHALANGE WAS ALSO RESPONSIBLE FOR BEKAA MURDERS. SYRIAN POLICY TOWARD LEBANON HAS BEEN CONSTANT IN SUPPORT OF PRES SARKIS AND LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT. SARKIS MUST ACT TO STOP THIS SUBVERSION. U.S. SHOULD EXERT PRESSURE ON CHAMOUN AND PHALANGE. US AND SYRIA SHOULD REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT. END SUMMARY.

2. SAW FONMIN KHADDAM EVENING JULY 2 TO FOLLOW UP UNDERSECRETARY
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NEWSOM'S TELEPHONE CALL TO AMBASSADOR KABBANI AND TO REQUEST KHADDAM'S VIEWS ON EVOLUTION OF CURRENT SITUATION IN BEIRUT IN LIGHT OF RESUMED FIGHTING THIS AFTERNOON. KHADDAM SAID REPORT HAD BEEN RECEIVED FROM AMBASSADOR KABBANI GIST OF WHICH WAS THAT PRES SARKIS HAD INFORMED AMB PARKER SYRIAN FORCES HAD ENCIRCLED CHRISTIAN AREAS AND WERE PROVOKING MILITIAS AND PRES SARKIS WAS ASKING FOR US ASSISTANCE. KHADDAM SAID HE HAD BEEN SURPRISED AT

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MESSAGE AND HAD TELEPHONED SARKIS WHO HAD ALSO BEEN SURPRISED. SARKIS TOLD KHADDAM THAT TO THE CONTRARY, HE HAD ASKED AMERICAN AMBASSADOR TO PUT PRESSURE ON THE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUN TO STOP THEIR SUBVERSIVE ACTIONS.

3. I INTERRUPTED THE MINISTER HERE AND SAID I WANTED TO CORRECT A MISCONCEPTION BEFORE WE WENT ANY FURTHER. PRESIDENT SARKIS HAD LAID BLAME FOR PROVOKING YESTERDAY'S FIGHTING ON NLP MILITIA AND ELIAS HANNUSH. FIGHTING WAS STILL GOING ON WHEN CONVERSATION TOOK PLACE AND SARKIS SOUGHT OUR ADVICE. UNITED STATES HAD CONSISTENTLY SUPPORTED AND APPRECIATED SYRIAN ROLE IN ATTEMPTING TO RESTORE ORDER TO VARIOUS PARTS OF LEBANON AND OUR DISCUSSION WITH AMB KABBANI HAD BEEN IN THAT SPIRIT.

4. KHADDAM EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS CLARIFICATION THEN MADE FOLLOWING POINTS:

A. IN SYRIA'S VIEW THE PHALANGE AND CHAMOUN WERE CARRYING OUT A PLAN TO DESTROY MOVEMENT TOWARD PEACE AND SECURITY IN LEBANON THROUGH SERIES OF ASSASSINATIONS AND DESTRUCTIVE INCIDENTS AGAINST MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS ALIKE. KILLING OF TONY FRANGIEH AND HIS FAMILY WAS ONE SUCH INCIDENT. ANOTHER OCCURRED WHEN ELEMENTS WHICH SYRIA BELIEVED WERE PHALANGIST INFILTRATED BEKAA VILLAGES AND KILLED CHRISTIANS IN ORDER TO COVER UP THIER IHDEN CRIME AND REVERSE THE POST-IHDEN CHRISTIAN REACTION AGAINST THE PHALANGE.

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B. JULY 1 INCIDENT BEGAN WHEN ARMED MEN SPREAD THROUGH AIR ROUMANEH AND BEGAN FIRING ON ADF, WHICH RETURNED FIRE IN ACCORD-ANCE WITH ITS MISSION. ADF HAD BEEN DELIBERATELY PROVOKED, BUT ITS PRESENCE IN LEBANON WAS LEGITIMATE ONE OF CONSOLIDATING SECURITY AND AUTHORITY OF LEBANESE GOVERNMENT. IT COULD NOT STAND BY WITH ARMS CROSSED OR IT WOULD LOSE ITS PRESTIGE AND BECOME INCAPABLE OF PERFORMING ITS DUTY. THEREFORE, ADF HAD SILENCED SOURCES OF FIRE FOLLOWING WHICH CONTACTS WERE MADE WITH LEBANESE SIDE AND CEASEFIRE ARRANGED.

C. AFTERNOON OF JULY 2, ADF WAS SUBJECTED TO ARTILLERY AND MACHINEGUN FIRE BY ARMED MILITIA OF NLP AND PHALANGE. HERE AGAIN IT WAS IMPERATIVE FOR ADF TO RETURN FIRE AND THAT WAS PRESENT SITUATION (8:00 P.M. LOCAL).

D. IN SYRIAN VIEW, LEBANESE GOVT MUST ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITIES AND FORCE DOWN THIS PHALANGE/CHAMOUN PLAN TO CONTROL LEBANON. IF IT ACTS TO PUT AN END TO THESE SUBVERSIVE ACTS, IT WILL HAVE SUPPORT OF MAJORITY OF LEBANESE PEOPLE, THE ARAB STATES AND WORLD PUBLIC OPINION.

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E. SYRIA HAS CONSISTENTLY TRIED TO HELP LEBANESE GOVT ASSUME ITS RESPONSIBILITES. IT HAS PROVIDED ADF FORCES TO PRES SARKIS. IT TRIED TO HELP HIM FORM A NATIONAL UNITY GOVERNMENT BUT CHAMOUN AND PHALANGE BLOCKED IT. IN LATTAKIA, PRES. ASSAD TOLD SARKIS SYRIA STANDS WITH THE LEGITIMATE GOVT OF LEBANON. ASSAD AGREED TO HELP SARKIS IN SENDING LEBANESE ARMY TO THE SOUTH "BY OPENING THE ROADS TO THE SOUTH AND PROTECTING THEM SO THAT THE LEBANESE ARMY WOULD NOT BE SUBJECT TO ANY AGRESSION BY ARMED GROUPS NORTH OF THE LITANI." THIS POSITION OF PRES ADDAD WAS BASED ON "OUR DESIRE TO CONTRIBUTE CONSTRUCTIVELY AND POSITIVELY TO RESTORING PEACE AND CALM THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND TO CONSOLIDATE AND EXTEND THE AUTHORITY OF THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT THROUGHTOUT LEBANESE TERRI-TORY. BY CITING THESE EXAMPLES, I WANT TO AFFIRM THAT SYRIAN POLICY TOWARD LEBANON IS CONSTANT. WE ARE EXTENDING OUR SUPPORT TO HELP OUR LEBANESE BROTHERS PUT AN END TO THEIR SAD AND PAINFUL PREDICAMENT."

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F. IN SYRIA'S VIEW, US SHOULD EXERT PRESSURE ON PHALANGE AND CHAMOUN AND INFORM THEM THAT PATH THEY ARE PURSUING WILL ONLY LEAD TO DESTRUCTION OF LEBANON.

5. KHADDAM THEN ASKED ME TO FILL HIM IN FURTHER ON PRES SARKIS' CONVERSATION WITH AMB PARKER. I TOLD HIM ABOUT SUGGESTION THAT SARKIS SUMMON ALL LEBANESE LEADERS AND ALSO THAT SARKIS REQUESTED WE DO WHAT WE COULD WITH BESHIR GEMAYEL "AND THOSE BEHIND HIM." KHADDAM SAID HE APPRECIATED THESE DETAILS. IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR US AND SYRIA TO REMAIN IN CLOSE CONTACT IN ORDER TO TRY TO CALM SITUATION, HE ADDED.

6. I ASKED KHADDAM WHETHER HE THOUGHT THERE WAS MORE PRES SARKIS COULD DO IN CURRENT SITUATION. HE REPLIED THAT IN SYRIA'S VIEW SARKIS COULD DO A GREAT DEAL BECAUSE HE HAD LEGITIMACY. SYRIA HAD CONSISTENTLY ADVISED SARKIS TO IMPOSE PRESTIGE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF THE STATE ON ANY PARTY, CHRISTIAN OR MUSLIM, LEBANESE OR NOT, AND SYRIA WOULD BE WITH HIM. SYRIA HAD ALSO ADVISED HIM TO HASTEN PROCESS OF REBUILDING ARMY, BUT SARKIS FACED OBSTACLES IN THIS FROM CHAMOUN AND THE PHALANGE. SARKIS MUST MOVE TO REBUILD ARMY THOUGH, AND SYRIA WOULD HELP HIM.

7. I PROBED KHADDAM FURTHER ON BEKAA INCIDENT, REFERRING TO RUMORS THAT FRANGIEH RESPONSIBLE AND ALSO TO CHAMOUN'S ACCUSATION AGAINST NON-LEBANESE PERPETRATORS. KHADDAM REPLIED THAT IN SYRIA'S ANALYSIS, PHALANGE WAS ONLY BENEFICIARY OF SUCH A TRAGEDY BECAUSE IT COVERED THE IHDEN MASSACRE. PHALANGE WANTED TO STOP CHRISTIAN REACTION AGAINST THEM AND RALLY OTHER CHRISTIAN GROUPS TO THEM BY POINTING FINGER AT SYRIA. BUT WHAT INTEREST COULD SYRIA HAVE IN SUCH AN ACT, HE ASKED. YESTERDAY, SYRIAN FORCES HAD STOPPED BECHIR GEMAYEL BUT LATER HAD RELEASED HIM. HAD SYRIA HAD AN INTEREST IN KILLING ANYONE AT ANY TIME IT COULD HAVE DONE SO. BEKAA WAS A GREAT TRADEGY WHICH TOUCHED SYRIA DIRECTLY, BUT THE

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ONLY ONE TO BENEFIT FROM SUCH A CRIME WAS THE PHALANGE. IT WAS NOT IN SYRIA'S CHARACTER TO COMMIT SUCH BASE AND COWARDLY ACTS, KHADDAM ASSERTED.

8. RESPONDING TO A FINAL QUESTION ON WHEN HE THOUGHT THE LEBANESE ARMY COULD MOVE SOUTH, KHADDAM SAID DECISION RESTED WITH PRES SARKIS. SYRIA THOUGHT ARMY SHOULD MOVE SOUTH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO COMPLETE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNSC RES 425. ONCE PRESENT SITUATION CALMED DOWN, SYRIA WOULD URGE HIM TO MAKE THIS DECISION BUT FOR NOW HHE HAD TO DEAL WITH THREAT OF WAR BETWEEN PHALANGE AND FRANJIEH. WHEN HE HAD GONE TO PAY CONDOLENCES ON FRANGIEH, ALL LATTER COULD TALK ABOUT WAS REVENGE. IT WAS MINDLESS AND WITHOUT REASON. SARKIS HAD SENT PARTY OF HIS ARMY NORTH TO PREVENT CLASHES BUT NO ONE KNEW WHETHER THIS WOULD BE ENOUGH.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
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Channel Indicators: n/a
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Concepts: MINISTERIAL MEETINGS, COMBAT OPERATIONS
Control Number: n/a
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Draft Date: 02 jul 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
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Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780273-0788
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
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Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 78 STATE 167957
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24 jun 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1852046
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: FONMIN KHADDAM\'S VIEWS ON FIGHTING IN LEBANON
TAGS: PINT, PINS, LE, SY, (KHADDAM, ABD AL-HALIM)
To: STATE BEIRUT
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/a7754a6b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
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Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014